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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/FO AND SA/FO AMB QUINN
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN/KAMEND

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SUBJECT: CN MEETING WITH GOVERNOR OF BADAKHSHAN IN KABUL

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: At a December 6, 2005 meeting at the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN), Badakhshan Governor Majeed spoke about rural development assistance and reduction of opium cultivation with MCN Minister Qaderi and representatives of the MCN, UK Embassy, and US Embassy. Several members of the Badakhshan Provincial Council, as well as newly-elected parliamentarians attended the meeting. End Summary.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE NEEDED

12. (SBU) The governor and other provincial representatives agreed that Badakhshan was neglected and poverty-stricken with no social services and infrastructure. The governor said that no visible or large-scale projects were evident in Badakhshan; such projects are needed to convince the populace that the GOA and donor community are addressing their needs. Consensus was reached on the need for roads, health care, education, potable water and electricity.

13. (SBU) All parties agreed that the donors and the GOA need to consult and coordinate activities. The Governor mentioned one example where he did not support a recent canal cleaning project but decided not to counter the idea as he didn't want to be seen as being in conflict with the donor or international community. The fact that the population does not usually appreciate the scale of donations also arose. MCN Minister Qaderi was himself startled to hear that DFID has committed USD 30 million to projects in Badakhshan over three years.

PROBLEMS WITH POPPY

14. (SBU) Counter Narcotics Task Force (CNTF) Director Doug Wankel stressed to the governor the dangers of opium production, highlighting the impact that it has on the local population, both in terms of addiction and health, as well as damage to the environment through the use of chemicals in the heroin labs. Wankel congratulated the Governor on achieving a 50% reduction in poppy cultivation from the previous year, but cautioned that he can not afford to be complacent, particularly when reports exist that growth is on the rise this year.

15. (SBU) The Governor said that he also believed that production was increasing and was prepared to conduct eradication this year and highlighted the importance of eradication being comprehensive. He added that leaving one field untouched while eradicating an adjacent field was problematic. The Governor ended the discussion by pledging his unconditional support to the fight against poppy: "I am all against this evil."

CN JIRGA PLANNED

17. (SBU) A CN jirga (a tribal assembly which takes decisions by consensus) in Feyzabad, was held on November 20 but without high-level participation. A subsequent jirga is planned for late December or early January. This jirga meeting format presents a good opportunity for the UK and USG to continue their outreach to the Afghan public.

18. (SBU) Comment: As we have seen on earlier occasions, the Afghan public and its government leaders do not fully realize or appreciate the scale of donations and development assistance from the international community. While the GOA must do a better job of coordinating with the Provincial Governors on development programs, the USG, along with UK as the lead nation on CN, must continue to improve its public outreach so that the local population has a better appreciation of what the international community is doing for the Afghan population. End comment.

NEUMANN